



Transportation Synthesis Report

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Improvements to Graduated Driver License Programs

Prepared for
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Transportation Synthesis Reports (TSRs) are brief summaries of currently available information on topics of interest to WisDOT staff. Online and print sources include NCHRP and other TRB programs, AASHTO, the research and practices of other state DOTs, and related research and news. Internet hyperlinks in TSRs are active at the time of publication, but changes on the host server can make them obsolete.

REQUEST FOR REPORT

Many states employ a graduated driver license (GDL) program that “allows novice drivers to gain knowledge and driving experience under the supervision of an experienced mentor as they progress through the learning stages.” In Wisconsin, for example, new drivers under the age of 18 must first obtain an instruction permit and then accumulate 30 hours of supervised driving experience with an adult sponsor. Once granted a probationary license, restrictions still apply, such as who can ride with the young driver, the hours he/she can drive alone and how many friends can ride along. (See further details at <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/drivers/gdl/index.htm>.) While Wisconsin’s GDL law, enacted in 2000, appears to have contributed to a reduction in young driver crashes and injuries, (see <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/safety/motorist/teendriving/>), officials in the Bureau of Transportation Safety are interested in potential adjustments to the GDL law that may improve safety even further. The RD&T Program was asked to review research on the subject and promising modifications to GDL laws in other states.

SUMMARY

States are employing a variety of strategies to improve their GDL programs and to encourage safe driving for novices (see **State Practices**):

- **Alaska** – Provisional licensing now requires 40 hours of driving experience, including 10 hours driving in challenging conditions such as nighttime and inclement weather. Violation of provisional restrictions entails a mandatory court appearance.
- **Connecticut** – DMV may now issue graduated licensing with special restrictions (corrective lenses, daylight hours, automatic transmission...) to allow operation for special needs drivers.
- **Illinois** – For the first six months of licensing or until age 18, the number of passengers in a vehicle is limited to one person under the age of 20, unless the additional passenger(s) is a sibling, step-sibling, child or step-child of the driver.
- **Iowa** – The Highway Safety Management System Toolbox provides innovative strategies for GDL legislation, policy, enforcement, education and public awareness.
- **Michigan** – For GDL and other new drivers, probation (three years) is followed by post-probation (two years). During the latter, motorists are subject to a driver assessment reexamination if they have nine or more points and an at-fault crash.
- **Ohio** – The Licking County Safe Communities Coalition developed a program to help teens who recently received a GDL reduce their risk of being injured or killed in a motor vehicle crash.
- **Pennsylvania** – PennDOT developed an engaging Web site for new motorists designed to raise consciousness about driving rules, safe and unsafe driving practices, consequences of poor decision-making behind the wheel, and other issues.

Colorado, Maryland and Montana have been waging efforts to bolster their GDL programs through new legislation (see **News Items**).

We located a number of research reports that provide guidance for improving GDL programs (see **Research**):

- ***Graduated Licensing: A Blueprint for North America*** presents recommendations for the structure and content of GDL programs and reviews best practices for the varied programs introduced in the past decade.
- ***Graduated driver licensing restrictions: awareness, compliance, and enforcement in North Carolina*** examines the extent to which restrictions on teen night driving and teen passengers in North Carolina's GDL system are known, adhered to and enforced.
- ***Graduated driver licensing research in 2003 and beyond*** updates the comprehensive GDL summary published in the January 2003 special issue of the Journal of Safety Research. It summarizes recent research not included in the special issue as well as research in progress or planned research.
- **Additional documents** cited in this section address how to achieve the maximum benefit from GDL by ensuring compliance with protective restrictions, and assess the contribution of various GDL elements to reduction in the crash rates of young novice drivers.

STATE PRACTICES

Alaska

Division of Motor Vehicles

Provision Licensing

<http://www.state.ak.us/dmv/akol/teenlaw.htm>.

Effective Jan. 1, 2005- If a person obtains an original permit after June 29, 2004 or obtains the first driver license after Dec. 31, 2004, the following applies:

- A parent, legal guardian or employer must provide proof that the person has had at least 40 hours of driving experience. This must include at least 10 hours of driving in challenging circumstances such as inclement weather and nighttime driving.

Provisional License Restrictions (minimum of six months - up to age 18):

- May not carry passengers under the age of 21, except siblings.
- May not operate a motor vehicle between the hours of 1 and 5 a.m.

Failure to follow Restrictions:

- A violation of the restrictions is an infraction that requires a mandatory court appearance.

Connecticut

Implementing the AASHTO Strategic Highway Safety Plan

Connecticut's Graduated Driver Licensing Program

http://www.ct.gov/dmv/taxonomy/ct_taxonomy.asp?DLN=28980&dmvNav=|28980|&dmvNav

The Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles has developed a GDL program for the person whose abilities, for whatever reason, have changed since his or her initial licensing. Under this program, the DMV is allowed to issue new licenses to drivers who would not have qualified for a license previously. A graduated license may contain one or more of the following limitations which will be noted on the license document and operation of a motor vehicle is permitted only: during the periods of daylight hours, when the driver is wearing corrective lenses, on non-limited access highways, in a vehicle having an automatic transmission, in a vehicle equipped with external mirrors located on the left and right sides, in a vehicle having noted special controls and equipment.

Illinois

<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/drivers/programs/gdl.html#Permit>.

New Changes to Teen Driving Laws

Effective Jan. 1, 2004, the GDL law will change to reflect new passenger limitations for beginning teen drivers. For the first six months of a person's license or until the driver is age 18, whichever occurs first, the number of passengers in a vehicle is limited to one person under the age of 20, unless the additional passenger(s) is a sibling, step-sibling, child or step-child of the driver.

Scroll to Permit Phase Drivers Age 15:

- 11 p.m. curfew Sunday-Thursdays; midnight Friday and Saturday (local curfews may differ).

Scroll to Initial Licensing Phase Drivers Age 16-17:

- 11 p.m. curfew Sunday-Thursdays; midnight Friday and Saturday only for 16-year-olds.
- Sanctions- conviction of any moving violation before age 18 generates Secretary of State warning letter to parent and teen.

Iowa

Graduated Driver License: Iowa's Experience Since the Law's Inception
Iowa Department of Transportation, May 2003

<http://www.dot.state.ia.us/mvd/ods/gdlstudy.pdf>.

Scroll to Pages 3 and 4- Remedial Driver Improvement Actions

Intermediate drivers who are convicted of a moving violation on their intermediate license or were involved in a motor vehicle crash to which they contributed, are being called in for a remedial driver interview. Following the interview they will have their one-year intermediate status extended plus they may have new restrictions added to their license, have their license downgraded to their previous license type or have their license suspended. It should be noted that one sign that the new law is having some impact on the behavior of 16-year-old drivers is that even though the total number interviews held in 2000 doubled the number held in 1999, the number of drivers suspended for failing to appear for the interview increased by less than 100. Then in 2001 and 2002, even though the number of interviews increased at a slower pace, the number of drivers suspended for failing to appear actually declined back to the same number suspended when only 7,000 interviews were being held in the first year of the GDL law. That number has stabilized, at least near-term, at the 350 case level. This means that the percentage of drivers who failed to appear for their interview has decreased from 4.9 percent in the first year to 1.7 percent in 2002. It appears that these young drivers are beginning to take the interview process seriously. (Also see "Remedial Driver Improvement": <http://www.iamvd.com/ods/gdl.htm#REMEDIAL%20DRIVER%20IMPROVEMENT>.)

Iowa Highway Safety Management System - Toolbox
Chapter 7- Education and Licensing for Young Drivers

<http://www.iowasms.org/pdfs/toolbox/chapter07.pdf>.

Scroll to Page 6- Potential Strategies

Legislation, Policy and Enforcement. Strategies include:

- Place speed and/or road-type limitations on novice drivers.
- Administer additional road tests at all licensing levels as new drivers progress.
- Enforce existing curfews strictly to ensure continued and consistent compliance.
- Investigate rural/urban and other special characteristics of localized crash data for targeted enforcement (and education).

Page 7- Education and Public Awareness. Strategies include:

- Create a joint Iowa Departments of Transportation and Education Web site for driver education instructors, students and partners. Post all available GDL tools, materials and appropriate statistical reports. (See Page 9- Successes and Strategies Implemented- "The Iowa Departments...")
- Continue driver education programs and review the content and subjects required as system elements, laws and behaviors change. Examples: include onboard devices, technology in vehicles and future intelligent transportation systems concepts and realities; monitor and evaluate driver simulation developments for driver education.
- Develop and implement a transportation safety curriculum for K-12 focused on multimodal and risk-focused prevention [Oregon model]. (See Page 9- Successes and Strategies Implemented- "Young drivers...")

Michigan

Department of State- Driver License and State ID

Probation

http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,1607,7-127-1627_8669_8998-23310--,00.html.

New drivers, including teen drivers under Graduated Driver Licensing, are placed on probation for a minimum of three years. Although probation is a separate program from GDL, the objective of both programs is to help young drivers reduce their crash risk and drive safely. Each traffic violation entered on the driver record during probation will result in a contact by the Secretary of State, becoming progressively more severe in response to continued unsafe driving. These contacts range from warning letters to a driver assessment reexamination. At a driver assessment reexamination, a combination of restrictions and suspension may be imposed on the license. Probationary licensing controls will also extend the time a young driver holds a GDL Level 1 or 2 license.

Probationary drivers must complete the last 10 months of probation with no unsafe driving events, such as traffic convictions, at-fault crashes or suspensions. If an unsafe driving event occurs in the last 10 months of probation, the probationary period is extended until the driver completes 10 consecutive months without an incident. The first two years after probation are called post probation. Drivers are subject to a driver assessment reexamination during this time if they have nine or more points and an alcohol-related ticket or crash, or other at-fault crash. Points placed on the driver record during probation or post probation are not automatically erased when probation and post probation end. Points remain on the driving record for two years from the conviction date.

Ohio

Graduated Driver License Parties

NHTSA Traffic Safety Digest, Summer 2000

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/outreach/safedige/summer2000/sum00-7.html>.

The Licking County Safe Communities Coalition, whose partners include the Licking County Health Department, Ohio State Highway Patrol, Licking County Sheriff's Office, local police and schools, focused their efforts on developing a program to help teens who have recently received a GDL reduce their risk of being injured or killed in a motor vehicle crash. Using a similar program in Kentucky as a model, the coalition developed the Graduated Drivers License Parties program. The project utilized law enforcement officers and Licking County Health Department staff to present a preventive/proactive message to youthful drivers on impaired driving, speed control, seat belt use and aggressive driving. Tenth grade students in each participating high school received an invitation to participate in the program, along with a packet of materials related to it. Each party consisted of a 45-minute presentation conducted during school hours, with refreshments served at its conclusion. Participating students received a special key tag, containing a compartment designed to hold a small amount of change. The change could be used by students to make a phone call if they found themselves in a situation where they were unable to drive.

Pennsylvania

Driver & Vehicle Services- FAQ About the Licensing Requirements for Young Drivers

http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/young_drivers/young_driver_faq.shtml#Q01.

The Young Driver Law- What are the licensing requirements for young drivers?

- Those with learner's permits or junior licenses are restricted from driving between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m.
- A parent or guardian must certify that his or her young driver has completed at least 50 hours of behind-the-wheel practice supervised by adult(s) age 21 or older.

Crossroads Web site

<http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/crossroads/index.html>.

PennDOT developed this entertaining and educational Web site. It engages young motorists by providing driving situations that are familiar to teens, and highlights factors that contribute to the problems that novice drivers face such as: driving rules, safe and unsafe driving practices, consequences of poor decision-making and carelessness. The home page provides users with a quick introduction to the characters that leads them into situations with unique story lines. A quiz accompanies each story to challenge the user's driving knowledge.

NEWS ITEMS

Colorado

Roads to be safer for teens

The Daily Times-Call, April 24, 2005

<http://www.longmontfyi.com/region-story.asp?ID=1433>.

"Under a measure Gov. Bill Owens signed into law earlier this month, teens can't use a cell phone while they're driving on a learner's permit, even if the adult passengers might allow it." The cell phone ban won't take effect until Aug. 10. Another measure signed into law Thursday will restrict newly licensed teen drivers from carrying teen passengers, effective July 1.

Maryland

NAMIC Commends Md. Legislative Focus on Teens; Other Bills Discussed

Insurance Journal, May 5, 2005

<http://www.insurancejournal.com/news/east/2005/05/05/54752.htm>.

"Resisting efforts to impose new regulatory mandates, the Maryland legislature's enactment of seven bills to enhance the state's teen driver graduated licensing statutes and provide stricter provisions for driving permits will address a key loss area for insurers, according to the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies.

"Brief descriptions of the bills relating to teen drivers follow:

* SB 57 and HB 393 prohibit provisional license holders under 18 from driving with passengers who are under 18, for five months after the provisional license is issued. The prohibition is not applicable if there is an older, supervising driver in the vehicle or if the passenger is a relative of the driver.

* HB 395 requires at least 60 hours, 10 hours of which must occur during the period beginning 30 minutes before sunset and ending 30 minutes after sunrise, of behind-the-wheel driving practice supervised by an individual who holds a valid driver's license, is at least 21, and has been licensed to drive for at least three years.

* SB 50 and HB 394 provide that, except for calls to 9-1-1, an individual under 18 who holds a learner's permit or a provisional driver's license is prohibited from using a wireless communication device while operating a motor vehicle.

* SB 209 provides that a learner's permit holder may only apply for a provisional driver's license six months after first receiving the learner's permit or committing a moving violation that resulted in a conviction. The Motor Vehicle Administration may not issue a provisional license to an individual who is younger than 16 years, 3 months, or a license to an individual younger than 17 years, 9 months.

* SB 206 expands the prohibition against a person receiving a nonprovisional driver's license. The existing 18-month waiting period for an unrestricted license starts anew from the date of a violation of provisional driver's night driving restrictions or safety restraint restrictions, or the date of restoration of the person's provisional driver's license or driving privilege that has been revoked or suspended."

Montana

Gazette opinion: Drug-use data underscores need for changes in Montana

Billings Gazette, April 11, 2005

<http://www.billingsgazette.com/index.php?id=1&display=rednews/2005/04/11/build/opinion/30-gazette-opinion.inc>.

"The 2005 Legislature is on the brink of strengthening laws for safer, sober driving in Montana. These important safety measures include SB104, a teen driver bill sponsored by Sen. Kim Gillan of Billings... And although Montana grants full driving privileges to 15-year-olds, it will be the last state to put safety restrictions on novice, minor drivers. There is a connection between graduated drivers licenses and underage alcohol abuse. It's about creating (or failing to create) an attitude that underage drinking is risky. The 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that drivers ages 15 to 17 in states with the most restrictive graduated driver licensing had lower rates of heavy drinking than teens in states with the least-restrictive driving laws, such as Montana. The teen drivers who had the most restrictions on their driving privileges (such as not being allowed to drive late at night) also were less likely to be driving under the influence."

Research

"Graduated Licensing: A Blueprint for North America"

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Traffic Injury Research Foundation, August 2004

http://www.iihs.org/safety_facts/teens/blueprint.pdf.

This document presents recommendations for the structure and content of GDL programs and provides direction on best practices for the varied programs introduced in the past decade.

"Graduated driver licensing restrictions: awareness, compliance, and enforcement in North Carolina"

Journal of Safety Research, Vol. 35, Issue 4, 2004

Abstract courtesy of TRIS Online:

<http://199.79.179.82/sundev/detail.cfm?ANNUMBER=00980573&STARTROW=1&CFID=1553376&CFTOKEN=29950957>.

Since 1997, North Carolina has had a three-tier GDL system. The second stage places restrictions on teen night driving and carrying of teen passengers. This study examines the extent to which these restrictions in North Carolina's GDL system are known, adhered to and enforced. Interviews were conducted with 20 law enforcement officers to obtain a sense of law enforcement views. The officers were supportive of GDL but unfamiliar with many of the specific provisions. Enforcement of GDL restrictions did not appear to be a high priority. These results suggest a need to increase the belief among teens and their parents that police are enforcing GDL restrictions, and a need to increase traffic safety enforcement efforts aimed at teen drivers.

"Graduated driver licensing research in 2003 and beyond"

Journal of Traffic Safety Research, Vol. 35, Issue 1, 2004

Abstract courtesy of TRIS Online:

<http://199.79.179.82/sundev/detail.cfm?ANNUMBER=00971357&STARTROW=1&CFID=1553376&CFTOKEN=29950957>.

This paper updates the comprehensive GDL summary published in the January 2003 special issue of the Journal of Safety Research. It summarizes recent research not included in the special issue as well as research in progress or planned research. The most active research areas are risk factors for beginning teen drivers and evaluations of GDL programs. Results in each area strengthen the case for GDL. Additional research is producing valuable information about specific GDL implementation issues and the roles of parents and driver education in helping teens learn to drive safely.

“Enhancing the effectiveness of graduated driver licensing legislation”

Journal of Traffic Safety Research, Vol. 34, Issue 1, 2003

<http://www.nsc.org/public/GDL/FossGoodwin.pdf>.

This article addresses how to achieve the maximum benefit from GDL by ensuring compliance with protective restrictions. Some of the strategies discussed are: enhancing GDL through system structure; encouraging compliance through system structure; and encouraging compliance through enforcement. The paper concludes that there is a need for better designed GDL systems in many states. More research is needed to examine compliance with restrictions and to evaluate enforcement efforts by parents and law enforcement.

“Graduated driver licensing: what works?”

Injury Prevention, Vol. 8, 2002

http://ip.bmjournals.com/cgi/reprint/8/suppl_2/ii32.pdf.

The aim of this paper is to assess the contribution of various GDL elements to reduction in the crash rates of young novice drivers. An extensive review of the literature was conducted to synthesize research findings on crash reduction. Increasing the length of the learner period and the amount of practice required was found to reduce the crash risk, partly through improved performance and partly by delaying licensure. Intervening early with traffic violators and making full licensure dependent on a clean driving record provide both general and specific deterrents to unsafe driving. Restrictions on night driving and carrying passengers are effective in reducing the increased risk of these situations. The benefits of multistage instruction and testing as well as the use of visible tags to identify novices have not yet been adequately evaluated. While GDL has proven a generally effective means of reducing the crash risk of novice drivers, further controlled research is needed to assess the benefits of its individual components.